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Identification

The Fang (Fan, Fanwe, Mfang, Mpangoue, Pahouin, Pangwe) are a Bantu people. Dugast (1949) reports nearly 600,000 in Cameroon, and other sources report about 125,000 in Gabon. They are relatively recent immigrants from the upper Sanga in the NE, whence they were pushed by the Mbum and Baya. They did not reach the equator until about 1837. Among them live numerous scattered Pygmies of the Ajongo, Beku, and Jelli (Bagielli) groups. Of the numerous subtribes, the following are among the most important:

Bene (Bane), numbering about 60,000.
Betsi (Batchenga, Betchenga, Betsinga, Tsinga), numbering about 16,000.
Bobili, with the Bamvele, numbering about 25,000.
Bulu (Boulou), with the Tembama, Yelinda, Yengono, and Zaman, numbering about 110,000.
Eton (Etun, Toni), numbering about 112,000.
Ewondo, with the Evuzok, numbering about 100,000.
Fang proper, with the Mvae (Mwai, Mwei) and Ntum (Ntumu).
Mvele (Mwelle), numbering about 37,000.
Syeba (Osheba, Osieba).
Yaunde (Jaunde, Yaounde).
Yebekolo, numbering about 23,000.
Yekaba, numbering about 15,000.

Basic Economy

Primarily agricultural, with fishing of considerable subsidiary importance, followed by hunting and animal husbandry. The staple crops, in order of importance, are manioc, bananas, groundnuts, ngon (Cucumeropsis edulis), maize, taro, and yams, but makabo (Xanthosoma violaceum), sweet potatoes, squash (Cucurbita maxima), and peppers are also raised. Goats, sheep, dogs (eaten and used for hunting), and chickens are kept; ducks, pigs, and cats are recent introductions. Trade is of considerable importance. Cattle are not kept. There are markets.

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Sex Division of Labor

Men hunt, fish (but women engage in fish drives), tend livestock, and clear land, but women do all other agricultural work except the planting of ngon.

Property

Iron bars and spearheads are used as currency; other valuables include livestock and land. Women own no property except chickens. Movables are privately owned, but land is owned by the village headman, who receives a share of all game caught. Individual men have usufruct rights to land under cultivation.

Inheritance is patrilineal--by sons, by Br in default of sons. The ElSo (or another son designated by Fa) inherits half of all movable property, the remainder being divided among the younger sons.

Social Stratification

The Fang do not keep slaves.

Marriage

There are three prevailing modes of marriage:

a. By payment of a substantial bride-price--the equivalent of 200-750 German marks (1912) in spearhead money, weapons, sheep, and cloth.
b. By exchange, in which a man gives his Si or Da in exchange for a wife.
c. By gift of a daughter from a chief to a man of another sib to whom the chief has previously "lent" one of his wives, in return for faithful service.

Polygyny is general and preferred. The first wife is chief wife. Each wife has her own hut, and the husband sleeps with each for three nights in rotation. Secondary marriages are preferential with FaWi.

Family

The residential unit is a patrilocal extended family, which includes the families of brothers and sons and also of dependents.

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Residence

The patrilocal rule prevails, at least for marriages of the first two types.

Kin Groups and Exogamy

Local exogamy is usual.

There is some suggestion of bilateral kindreds; relatives on both the father's and mother's sides are called "my relations," and certain obligations of hospitality and sanctuary are involved. Marriage and sex relations are forbidden by maximally extended bilateral incest taboos.

There are exogamous unnamed patri-sibs and localized patri-lineages bearing ancestral names.

Kinship Terminology [from Johnston; K from Koch]

Fa--tata, tara, esa, tate (K). Mo--nya, nyie, nanne (K). Ch--mone, mon. Br--ndoma. Si--kal. Hu--fam. Wi--ngal, minningga (K).

GrFa, GrMo--nvamba.

Settlement Pattern

Settlements are compact villages of 2-50 huts arranged in two parallel rows, with one or more men's houses. The huts are rectangular with gable roofs.

Community Organization

The village is normally a patrilocal clan-community, consisting of one patrilocal extended family or of several headed by men of the same patrilineage. Boys are circumcised at about the age of puberty.

Local Government

Each village has a headman, who is normally succeeded by his ElSo.

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State

In general, there is no political integration above the local level. However, in the north, especially among the Mwele, chiefs commonly have authority over several villages.

Warfare

Intervillage warfare is common--caused usually by revenge for murder or by failure to return a bride-price or substitute another daughter when a bride dies. Cannibalism is practiced on slain enemies.

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